

ACTIVITY - WYCINANKI

ARTS DISCIPLINE:	Visual art
FINE ART STANDARD:	Standard 4 - Visual Art, History, and Culture
BENCHMARK:	Understand works of art among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics, functions, and purposes of visual art.
GRADES:	9-12

A.R.T.S. TRUNK OBJECTS

- Wycinanki “Chickens”
- *Faces of Identity: Hands of Skill*, book
- *Prairie Patterns: Folk Arts in North Dakota*, book

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Scrap paper for practice
- Drawing paper
- Origami or construction paper
- Scissors
- White glue
- Paper towels
- Access to library and the Internet

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Folk Art: Objects of aesthetic expression usually appreciated for their traditional aspects. Most artworks identified as folk come from traditional cultures and are learned in a nonacademic face-to-face interchange. While folk art often seems to be synonymous with ethnic art (Hmong storycloths, Amish quilts, or Mexican American death carts), it also comes from traditional communities held together by ties related to occupation, region, religion, generation, politics, economics, or family

From *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Jan Harold Brunvand

Wycinanki (pronounced vee-chee-naw-kee) is the folk art of Polish paper-cutting. It is believed that Wycinanki began in Poland during the nineteenth century by peasants living in the rural areas. Originally the peasants used sheep shears to cut out beautifully intricate and detailed designs from paper to decorate the white-washed walls of their houses.

Traditionally, the wall would be white-washed for the Easter season in the spring prior to putting up the newly cut decorations. Nowadays, this folk art has become popular in



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the United States and can be found in museums and specialty shops year-round.

Wycinanki consists of multiple layers of different colored papers, each intricately cut out separately and then pasted on top of one another. Typical designs are birds and flowers. Symmetry is a prominent characteristic of Wycinanki due to the process of folding the paper before cutting. Kurpi, a region north of Warsaw (the capital of Poland), is known for Gwiazda Wycinanki, a particular style of paper cutting that has the appearance of a snowflake or star design because of its layers of squares and circles.

PROCEDURE

- Share the background information with students and show the example of Wycinanki. Discuss.
- Show the the books *Faces of Identity: Hands of Skill* and *Prairie Patterns: Folk Arts in North Dakota*. Talk about the variety of folk-arts practiced in North Dakota and the distinctions between folk art and fine art.
- Assign groups of students to research:
 - other cultures that also practice the craft of paper-cutting
 - the folk art of a country of your choice
- Have students present the information they find from their research.
- Students experiment with Wycinanki. Method:
 - Practice on a square piece of paper. Fold the paper twice to create four sections.
 - Cut a border and an intricate design into the middle section of the paper.
 - Unfold paper and assess design. Experiment with other designs.
 - Select the best design and cut it out on a sheet of "good" paper.
 - Using tiny dots of white glue, adhere the design to the middle of a piece of background paper. (Tip: after gluing a design down, place a piece of "school" paper towel on top and press down firmly. Gently rub the glue towards the outer edges of the design. The paper towel will blot extra glue that may ooze from the cut paper.
 - Cut additional shapes to be glued on top of the first cut-out design.
 - Mount design and display.

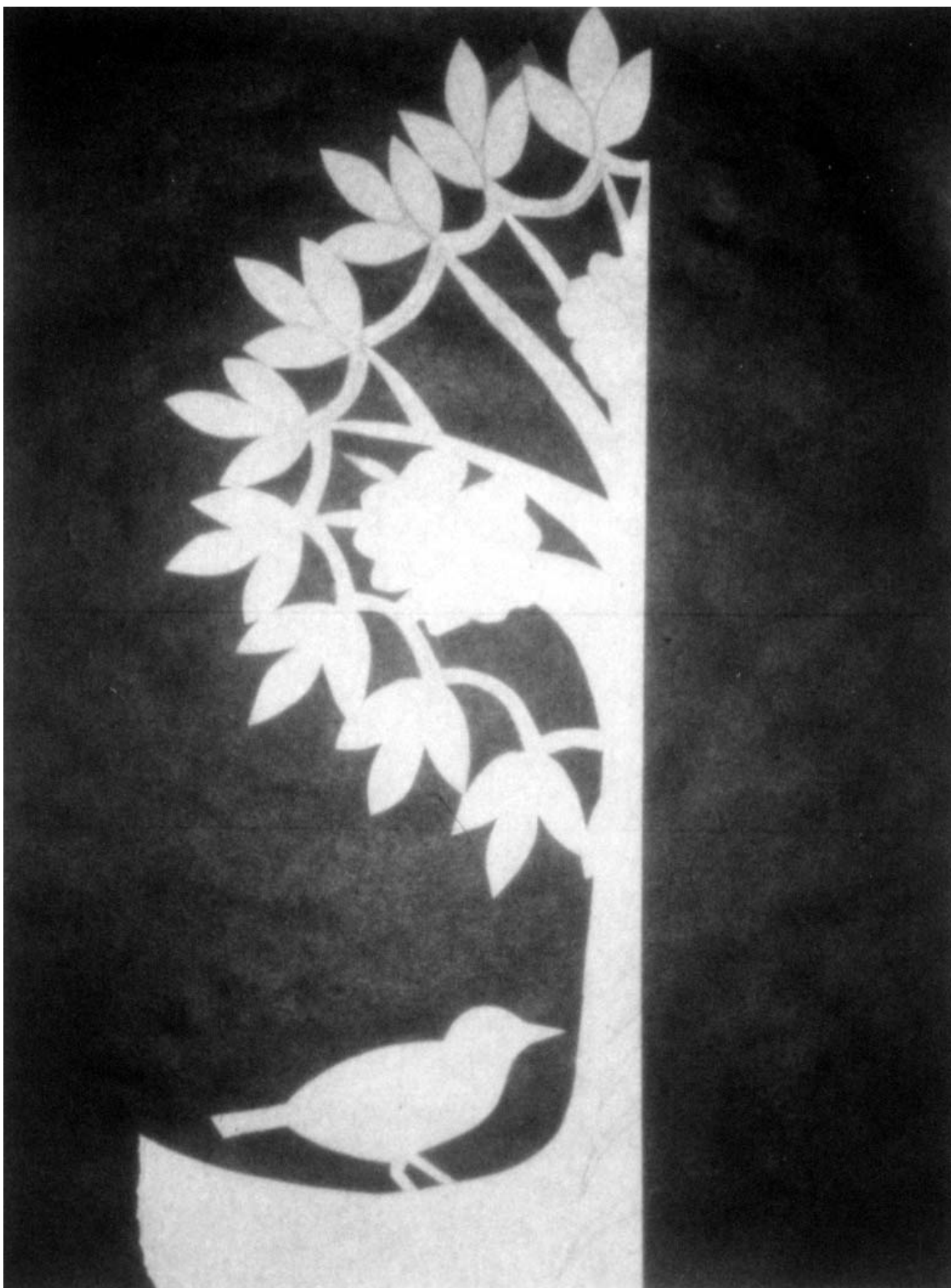
ASSESSMENT

- Participation in group discussions.
- Quality of research and presentation.
- Ability to identify Wycinanki works of art in reference to their historical and cultural context.
- Quality of craftsmanship displayed in completed paper-cutting.

REFERENCE SOURCE

- *Multicultural Art Activities Kit* by Dwila Bloom (The Center for Applied Research In Education, 1994)





Sample of Wycinanki, courtesy of Meridee Erickson-Stowman



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